



**Economic Development
Committee**

TOWN OF ACTON
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Minutes 05/18/06

Present: Ed Starzec, Chris Papas, Bill Lawrence, Lauren Rosenzweig, Rheta Roeber, Herman Kabakoff, Wayne Friedrichs, Ann Chang & Roland Bartl.

Lauren reported on the CWRMP. The CWRMP report will soon be sent into the DEP and from there it will go to MEPA (Mass Environmental Protection Agency). Lauren stated that the report covered the potential pollution problems for the next 20 years. Wayne asked if the report was worth the money, claiming that most was "boilerplate". Lauren disagreed, saying that the information and data was Acton-specific.

Herman wanted to know when he could make comments to MEPA. Lauren reminded him that once the report is sent to MEPA, a post card will be sent to residents informing them of the move and how to make comments. Herman questioned the efficacy of the comments asking if the report will really be changed. Roland said that MEPA will look at all the comments and see if they have merit. They can send the report back for a resubmit before the final filing.

Lauren said the CAC (Citizens' Advisory Committee) would not be doing the next phase but a new committee will be formed with members from all the Town boards that have any relevance to sewers. Herman said he had talked with several of his neighbors and they reached a consensus that "no action" should be taken. This was based on "the knowledge of our properties" and we want the color [on the maps] changed. He wanted to know the best way to make this known to MEPA. Lauren said that MEPA will work from the data presented. Roland said he was not sure that it was a good idea to present MEPA with all the differences from the Town. Rheta said she'd tried to get the backup data used in the report from the Board of Health. Herman said he done the same & to no effect.

Lauren's second report was on the formation of a Design Review committee. This committee will write guidelines to be used by developers when they start on the process of construction. Lauren said this committee has grown out of the stated citizens' desire to see guidelines that will reflect the "Town's Character".

She was asked if there were a definition for "Town Character." Not really but there was a visual preference surveys from MAPC that studied the designs for mixed use. The guidelines will be part of the permitting process. Lauren claimed that developers liked to be told in advance what sorts of designs were acceptable because they were usually willing to follow the guidelines to speed up the permitting process. There was some skepticism that the guidelines would make the permitting process faster. Wayne asked for examples of towns that had the guidelines---Franklin, Boxboro Lexington, Needham & Wellesley. [he would like to see their guidelines]

Rheta said she feared that such guidelines would be used to stop commercial growth & slow down the process that is already too long.

Lauren said the goal was to make the process quicker---the guidelines would be used in the early phase of the plans and changes could be made before going in front of any of the permitting boards.

Lauren was not sure if the guidelines would become bylaws---it is too early in the process. Ed said that

Devens has design guidelines that are a part of the construction contract. A Devens permit takes 75 days---there is also a 30-day appeal period after that.

Lauren suggested that EDV members join in the design review committee and help format the look of the town for the next 30 or so years.

Lauren's third report was on MAGIC. MAGIC is concentrating on transportation issues---public transportation. The questions are about the Littleton train station. She said there is recognition that a station, with ample parking, is needed at 495/Rt2. Ed said that the state reps are advocating for a different location.

Assisted Living Site plan

The EDC voted to send a letter of support for the expansion of Robbins Brook. The plan is to construct 10 more independent living units with one as affordable. Rheta said the EDC should make public note every time a commercial parcel changes to residential. Wayne reminded her that the assisted living units were a business. However she maintained that the EDC should at least comment & state their opposition to such changes.

Oversight meeting

Ed expects to go before the selectmen for a review of the EDC activities & to state what the committee has accomplished & expect to do in the coming months/year.

Wayne suggested the committee meet quarterly or at times when a particular proposal comes forward. Bill agreed that the EDC could cut back on the frequency of the meetings. Lauren said it was important for the BoS to hear the business perspective.

Herman noted that he felt the BoS was anti business and cited the requirement for the sidewalk along Main Street at \$1,500 and the treatment of Leo Bertalomi & his building on Rt. 62.

Wayne noted the majority of the commercial site plans reviewed by the BoS are also supported by that board. Rheta suggested revisiting the zoning changes made for the Technology district with the planning board to see if they were working; looking into the issue of design standards---a concept that made her nervous; and finally get something done with Exchange Hall.

Ann Suggested taking it by eminent domain---Wayne agreed. Bill & Herman were opposed to such a move. There was a general discussion about Exchange Hall & the "progress" that is expected. Wayne pushed the idea of eminent domain & flipping it to a more responsive developer. Lauren said the BoS was meeting with the owner of Exchange Hall shortly & that it appeared plans for its restoration were in the works.

There was a general discussion about the need for a better response from the building commissioners department to developers and people interested in getting new construction done in Acton. Rheta proposed having an ombudsman in place so there would be a central location for the necessary information. However, such a position might make the permitting process longer rather than shorter. Ann said that the building commissioner was best suited for this position and all he needed was more staff to help out in his department. It was agreed that the EDC would like to talk with Garry Rhodes about his job & the needs he see for additional staff to make the construction process speedier.

Roland agreed contact Garry & ask him to meet with the EDC. It was agreed that June 15th was the first choice for such a meeting

Adjourned at 9PM

Ann Chang, pro tem